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## George Moore : Cultural Tourist in France

Eamon Maher

Technological University Dublin, [eamon.maher@tudublin.ie](mailto:eamon.maher@tudublin.ie)

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### 3 George Moore: Cultural Tourist in France

#### ABSTRACT

Of all the Irish writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, George Moore (1852–1933) is the one who was most embedded in French literature, painting and culture. Taking the strongly autobiographical *Confessions of a Young Man* as its main focal point, this chapter will examine Moore's love affair with France and the influence this exerted on his literary and artistic evolution. In *Confessions*, we read the extent of Moore's attraction to Paris: '[...] my thoughts reverted to France, which always haunted me; and which now possessed me with the sweet and magnetic influence of home.'<sup>1</sup> Moore clearly had a deep appreciation of France and of the French and this chapter will show the full breadth of what could be termed a mutually enriching cultural encounter.

Of all the Irish writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, George Moore (1852–1933) is undoubtedly the one whose artistic destiny was fashioned to the greatest extent by his immersion in French literature, painting and culture. He was on intimate terms with literary figures of the stature of Émile Zola, Théophile Gautier, Edouard Dujardin (the originator of the 'stream of consciousness' technique he later adopted along with James Joyce and Virginia Woolf), as well as the impressionist painters Renoir, Degas and Manet. In fact, Manet did a number of portraits of Moore and once famously stated to his friend: 'There is no Englishman who occupies the position you do in Paris.'<sup>2</sup> No English-speaking foreigner, not even his contemporary Joyce, inspired the esteem that Moore enjoyed among artistic circles in Paris which, when he arrived there for the first time in the

<sup>1</sup> George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man* (USA: Leeaf Classics, 2013), no page numbers supplied.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by Adrian Frazier, *George Moore, 1852–1933* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 44. It is normal for Frazier and other Moore scholars to use the abbreviated form 'GM' to denote the writer.

1870s, was a veritable hive of cultural creativity. In addition to the figures already mentioned, Moore was also in regular contact with Paul Alexis, J. K. Huysmans, Stéphane Mallarmé and Villiers de l'Isle Adam. In fact, it is difficult to think of an influential writer or painter resident in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century whom Moore would not have known. It may well have been this fact that led Manet to remark as he did on the unique recognition accorded to his Irish friend in the French capital at this time.

For a Catholic landlord from the west of Ireland to make any impression, let alone the significant one attributed to him by Manet, on the artistic milieu of Paris in the 1870s, is the type of achievement that deserves examination and explanation. As the second chapter title of Adrian Frazier's superb biography of Moore indicates, Paris was Moore's Oxford and Cambridge. In other words, it was there that he would acquire the most important ingredients of what would constitute his artistic credo. He soon discovered that painting was not something to which his talents were particularly suited, but the time spent in the studio of Jules Lefebvre, and more importantly his amazing facility at gaining access to the most prestigious salons and artistic gatherings in Paris, meant that he had a keen understanding of what constituted good painting and how artists nurtured their gifts through hard graft and fruitful exchange. This insider knowledge would inevitably be a huge advantage to him when he took to writing insightful art criticism later in his career.

Reading about George Moore in Paris is like following the path of a man who was obsessed with acquiring new knowledge and making new acquaintances. He was like a sponge, absorbing all the comments he overheard, committing them to memory and later writing them up, particularly in the first autobiographical work he completed, *Confessions of a Young Man*, published in 1888. Adrian Frazier admits that it is difficult to trace in any accurate way Moore's movements in Paris or to explain how he came to prominence in the way that he did in the 1870s. He writes:

So towards the end of the decade Moore was at the centre of French cultural life, but even the French artists and writers were not watching him with the alertness of the cat before the mousehole, and they cannot tell us of him as well as he tells us of them. It was during the Paris years that GM gathered the experience of life out



of which he would create his self as an author, but he is not traceable in any very thorough way within these years.<sup>3</sup>

It can be slightly frustrating therefore to attempt to follow Moore's footsteps in Paris through the eyes of others. *He* is the observer par excellence, the one who loves to depict the various characters whom he observed in salons or whose studios he visited. It would be really useful if at least one of his acquaintances had written about him in the same way as he depicted so many others. On more than one occasion, his lack of restraint resulted in the alienation of some high-profile figures. One particularly explicit example of this tendency can be seen in the rift Moore created by revealing things about Degas that the painter had no desire to share with the general public. In the autumn of 1890, George Moore's article, 'Degas: The Painter of Modern Life', was published in the *Magazine of Art*. Moore had in fact sent the first draft of the piece to Degas who, according to Isabelle Enaud-Lechien, was not in favour of publication. Apparently, the painter had a pronounced antipathy towards journalists and looked on the proposed piece as a betrayal.<sup>4</sup> That said, Enaud-Lechien argues persuasively that Moore's article was influential in pointing out the innovation Degas introduced to French painting. The following quote shows a great awareness of the uniqueness of Degas' 'Tubs' series, for example:

A woman who has stepped out of a bath examines her arm. Degas says, 'La bête humaine qui s'occupe d'elle-même, une chatte qui se lèche'. Yes, it is the portrayal of the animal-life of the human being [...]. The nude has always been represented in poses which presuppose an audience, but these women of mine are honest, simple folk, unconcerned by any other interests than those involved in their physical condition. Here is another: she is washing her feet. It is as if you looked through a key hole.<sup>5</sup>

3 Adrian Frazier, *George Moore 1852-1933*, p. 35.

4 Isabelle Enaud-Lechien, 'Moore-Degas-Paris: Exchanges, Reminiscences and Intersecting Arts', in *George Moore's Paris and his Ongoing French Connections*, ed. Michel Brunet, Fabienne Gaspari and Mary Pierce (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 19-40, p. 27. This chapter provides an excellent account of Moore's in-depth understanding of Degas' art and the degree to which he provided an evaluation of the French painter in the Anglo-Saxon world that generated real interest in his work.

5 Cited by Enaud-Lechien, p. 29.

For all the accuracy of Moore's account, these lines contributed in no uncertain manner to creating the image of Degas as a 'misogynistic painter who was possibly a voyeur or peeping Tom',<sup>6</sup> something which would not have endeared Moore to his former friend. This episode encapsulates the compulsion that Moore had for using his personal knowledge of famous people and bringing it into the public domain without any real thought about how this might impact on them. More than a lack of discretion, Moore would seem to have suffered from a congenital inability to keep confidences, which naturally often led to his being shunned by certain mainstream figures in the artistic world who felt, perhaps with justification, that he could not be trusted. While there can be no doubt that Moore was a huge admirer of Degas and an excellent interpreter of his work, his decision to publish this article in the knowledge that he did not have the painter's approval, ultimately ended the friendship between them. It was a high price to pay.

Undoubtedly, spending time in Paris opened up all sorts of new avenues to the young Irish writer. It would have been hard to avoid the excitement of being in this cosmopolitan setting at such a key moment in its evolution into an artistic hub that would attract writers, artists and intellectuals from all over the world. Zola's experiments with literary naturalism, which involved the application of a scientific approach to the study of human nature and the idea of how environment and heredity exercise a determining influence on people's behaviour, the Impressionist movement in art, the enduring influence of the realism of Flaubert and Balzac, the talented practitioners who populated a meeting place to be located like the Café Nouvelle Athènes, all of this made of Paris *the* place for a young man anxious to embark on an artistic career. Moore wrote in *Confessions* of what it was like to be a regular in the Café Nouvelle Athènes at a time when it was frequented by the likes of Villiers de d'Isle-Adam, Manet, Degas, Renoir, Paul Alexis and a host of other luminaries:

What is the 'Nouvelle Athènes'? He who would know anything of my life must know something of the academy of the fine arts. Not the official stupidity you read of in



the daily papers, but the real French academy, the *café*. The 'Nouvelles Athènes' is a *café* on the Place Pigalle. Ah! The morning idlenesses and the long evenings when life was but a summer illusion, the grey moonlights on the Place where we used to stand on the pavements, the shutters clanging up behind us, loath to separate, thinking of what we had left said, and how much better we might have enforced our arguments. Dead and scattered are all those who used to assemble there, and those years of our home, for it was our home, live only in a few pictures and a few pages of prose.<sup>7</sup>

Moore conveys something of the excitement of café culture in the Paris of the 1870s in this passage. One can almost see the smoke curling around the figures crouched about a table, hear the writers and artists propounding their latest theories in an animated manner, smell the scent of wine and absinthe on their breath, sense the excitement of being at the epicentre of world culture at this time. It makes the drunken antics of Kavanagh or Behan in McDaid's pub, or Donaghy and Nesbitts, seem very tame by comparison. The nature of the interaction between artists would have been very different in the provincial Ireland of the mid-twentieth century and the sophisticated Paris of the 1870s. Moore was definitely a listener, someone who was anxious to learn from those with whom he came into contact. He was humble enough to recognise his limitations, but also had the self-confidence to realise that he, too, had a role to play in capturing and contributing to the excitement of the time. He stored away the advice given to him by the likes of Zola, Paul Alexis and Manet. It was the latter who exerted the most lasting influence, telling Moore that it didn't matter how badly someone painted as long as they didn't paint badly like other people. Individuality was crucial for the artist, and the uniqueness of a person's life inevitably shaped his art:

It is often said that the personality of the artist concerns us not, and in the case of bad Art, it is certainly true, for bad Art reveals no personality; bad Art is bad because it is anonymous. The work of the great artist is himself ... Manet's Art was all Manet.<sup>8</sup>

7 George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man* (New York: Brentano's, 1917), pp. 104–105.

8 Cited by Frazier, *George Moore*, p. 63.

It must be said that Moore's personality revealed itself steadily in a similar way as his Art developed and he found his true voice. At a certain point, one could justifiably say: 'Moore's Art was all Moore.' He was never prepared to close himself off from the possibility of new discoveries, which meant that he constantly reinvented himself as a personality and a writer. While initially a follower of Zola, he realised at a certain stage that Naturalism had its limits, which led him to turn to writers like Turgenev, Pater, Sterne and Dujardin for inspiration. When he left Paris to head to London in the 1880s, which by that point was undergoing the type of transformation Paris had had in the 70s, Moore plunged himself into the world of publishing, theatre and fiction with the type of unmatched energy which characterised his approach to life. He fell foul of the Select Library, which had control of the book trade and distribution in England at the time, and had great difficulty getting his books to their intended readers. But he somehow managed to turn it round and to write some highly acclaimed and successful works of fiction, many of them associated, possibly erroneously, with the Naturalist school of writing. Manet's main piece of advice to Moore was to be 'unashamed as a little child', and this was a motto to which he adhered throughout his career. In Paris, he discovered the dedication that was necessary to succeed as a writer. He had a large number of good role models on which to lean. The debates between the proponents of Romanticism and those who espoused Realism or Naturalism merely underlined how Art is timeless. We read in *Confessions*:

I did not know then, as I do now, that art is eternal, that it is only the artist that changes, and that the two great divisions – the only possible divisions – are: those who have talent, and those who have no talent. But I do not regret my follies; it is not well to know at once of the limitations of life and things. I should be less than nothing had it not been for my enthusiasms; they were the saving clause in my life.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, Moore was someone in tune with the importance of life experience in the shaping of an artistic sensibility. His tendency to overstep the mark at times, to behave like a Dandy, to indulge in a hectic social



life, all these found their way into his writings and gave them their special authentic ring. While *Confessions of a Young Man* is a classic blend of narrative genres and rich gossip, it is probably more interesting as a document about the Paris of the 1870s than it is revealing of Moore's own character and personality. What can be said with certainty is that the time he spent there was invaluable to the emerging writer. He seems to have surmounted his difficulties with the language relatively quickly, as otherwise he would not have been in a position to communicate the way he did with the various people with whom he interacted. In *Confessions*, we read the extent of Moore's attraction to Paris: '[...] my thoughts reverted to France, which always haunted me; and which now possessed me with the sweet and magnetic influence of home.'<sup>10</sup> Later in *Confessions*, he elaborates on what he views as the main differences between France and Ireland:

Two dominant notes in my character – an original hatred of my native country, and a brutal loathing of the religion I was brought up in. All the aspects of my native country are violently disagreeable to me, and I cannot think of the place I was born in without a sensation akin to nausea. These feelings are inherent and inveterate in me. I am instinctively averse from my own countrymen; they are at once remote and repulsive; but with Frenchmen I am conscious of a sense of nearness; I am one with them in their ideas and aspirations, and when I am with them, I am alive with a keen and penetrating sense of intimacy.<sup>11</sup>

This is the type of impassioned pronouncement that would become commonplace in Moore's subsequent career. He was never afraid to speak out about any issue which was preoccupying him at a given time. The importance of the Irish language to fostering a genuine national culture, the lack of genuine innovation in Irish literature during the Revival, the repressive role played by the Catholic Church in Irish society, especially in the realm of sexuality, Moore spoke out forcibly on all these issues at various times and ruffled a number of feathers at the same time. In a recent collection of essays devoted to Moore's work, Robert Becker somewhat outrageously

<sup>10</sup> *Confessions*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> *Confessions*, p. 117.



described the Mayo landlord as an 'Irish punk' and wrote the following about the time he spent in Paris:

Much may be said about Moore's sentimental education in Paris in the 1870s, when he was in his early to mid-twenties, and Moore himself said a lot in his memoirs. One thing that should *not* be said is that he had any serious purpose there. The ludic young adult, the punk, was in Paris mainly not to be elsewhere like London or Dublin or, God forbid, Ballyglass in County Mayo. He was there, not to be among family or class, not to pursue a career or start a family, but to oppose everything that might otherwise have defined or oriented or limited him.<sup>12</sup>

While clearly seeking to be provocative, Becker does touch on an interesting motivation for Moore's decision to move to Paris when he did. He needed and wanted a change of scene and Paris was possibly the one place where he could comfortably live the life of the dilettante. Writers at this time looked on travel as an invaluable means of building up a store of experiences that could be used subsequently – Moore's contemporary Henry James is possibly one of the best examples of this – and for someone with artistic leanings like Moore, the thought of setting up home in the French capital must have appeared extremely exotic. Whether his carefree attitude makes him an 'Irish punk' or not is less certain, but there is no question that Becker's analysis of the situation should be read as a statement made with a large dose of tongue in cheek. Moving to Paris was a definite break with home and with anything that might have been holding back the nascent artistic urges, and perhaps the other urges that were concurrently taking root in the young man, which would have found no comfortable outlet in Ireland.<sup>13</sup>

Let us now examine how Moore's disavowal of Ireland and his championing of France lie at the heart of his artistic inspiration. In a sense, in

12 Robert Becker, 'The Contrarian George Moore', in Maria Elena Jaime de Pablos and Mary Pierse (eds), *George Moore and the Quirks of Nature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 39–49, p. 41.

13 Adrian Frazier offers an interesting assessment of the myriad qualities that made up Moore's complex personality in the following manner: 'He is neither a married heterosexual nor an active homosexual. Neither Protestant nor Catholic, he is devoted to inquiry into Christianity, speculatively exploring the experience of faith from the position of faithlessness.' *George Moore*, p. XVII.

order to criticise the backwardness of Ireland, the enslavement of its people to a domineering Catholic Church, its lack of sophistication and elegance, Moore needed a counterbalance, and secular France was ideal for this purpose. One of Moore's better known novels, *The Lake* (1905), offers an example of the way in which the Paris years allowed the writer to envisage a scenario whereby a Catholic priest would abandon his parish and seek a more enlightened life far from the shores of Ireland. The secular vision that may be found in *The Lake* is one that was honed by Moore's discussions with various writers and individuals in Paris, the vast majority of whom (Huysmans being an exception) would not have been well disposed to organised religion, especially as it was practised in Ireland.

*The Lake* marks a departure in Irish literature in its portrayal of a priest, Fr Gogarty, who undergoes a psychological awakening, which causes him to lose his faith. This crisis results from his relationship with a teacher, Nora Glynn, whom he denounces from the pulpit and for whom he unknowingly harbours feelings of love. The form of Catholicism one encounters in *The Lake*, published in 1905, is one which bears all the hallmarks of Moore's own unbelief. In a letter to his brother Maurice, around the time he was composing *The Lake*, Moore made the following observation: 'One writes badly when one is in a passion; no one knows that better than I do.'<sup>14</sup> Moore was annoyed by his brother's religiosity, which he associated with ignorance and lack of sophistication. In the same correspondence, brought to light by Conor Montague, Moore belittled Maurice's religious beliefs in the following manner:

Agnosticism is not so infallible for the production of good literature as Catholicism is for the production of bad. You write like an angel, that I can see; you tell me you have nothing to say – well, Catholics never have, here or elsewhere – they are a silent lot.<sup>15</sup>

In light of such comments, Fr Gogarty seems to have quite a lot to say: he is occasionally, in fact, a rather obvious mouthpiece for some of Moore's

<sup>14</sup> Conor Montague, 'Philosophical Dialogue Between the Brothers Moore (1903–1905): A Capacity for Misunderstanding', in Maria Elena Jaime de Pablos and Mary Pierser (eds), *George Moore and the Quirks of Nature*, pp. 69–85, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup> Cited by Montague, p. 79.



own views in this reader's opinion. After Nora leaves the parish in disgrace, Gogarty reflects on his true feelings for her and sees that he 'wanted her body as well as her soul'.<sup>16</sup> In one of the many letters he writes her, he reveals how his training in Maynooth seminary taught him 'to despise women' (129), but that he was now determined to follow a different path: 'God gave us our human nature; we may misuse and degrade our nature, but we must never forget that it came originally from God' (129). The priest becomes increasingly fascinated by nature and associates Nora with the sun and the spring-tide. His quest, he discovers, is not so much Nora Glynn as the inner life he has discovered through the feelings she has aroused in him. He comes to view the Mass as 'a mere Latin formula' and sees his quest as 'that intimate exaltation that comes to him that has striven to be himself, and nothing but himself' (175).

While *The Lake* is a most interesting novel in many ways, especially in its daring experiments with narrative technique, the main problem is precisely the fault that Moore tried to warn his brother Maurice about, namely writing when in a passion. As already mentioned, Moore's view of the Catholic Church was at an all-time low at the time he was composing *The Lake*. Fr Gogarty's fascination with Nora Glynn stems from his belief that she is benefiting from the type of intellectual liberation that is only available outside of Ireland. On the continent, she is free to develop her own ideas and discuss them with like-minded people, without looking over her shoulder to ensure that her actions are not reported to the moral policemen that the Irish priests were at the time. Peter Connolly, a priest and former Professor of English in Maynooth College, is correct in his assessment that Moore and Joyce 'rejected the dogmatic and moral system of the Church in the name of the artist's search for freedom, but to a surprising extent they were obsessed with the priest as a personification of it all'.<sup>17</sup> For two of Ireland's most cosmopolitan writers, who saw themselves

16 George Moore, *The Lake*, with an Afterword by Richard Allen Cave (Gerards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1980), p. 121. All subsequent quotes will be to this edition, with page numbers in brackets.

17 Peter Connolly, 'The Priest in Modern Irish Fiction', *The Furrow* 9/12 (December 1958), pp. 782-797, p. 786.

in many ways as secular priests of the written word, art and religion were synonymous. Undoubtedly, prolonged stays in France influenced both writers and imbued in them a respect for truth and accuracy of expression, a freedom to say and do what they believed to be correct. That freedom was not available in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Hence Fr Gogarty, in the 'stream of consciousness' technique pioneered by Dujardin and adopted by Moore, can reflect on what exactly he seeks to achieve from leaving Ireland:

He was not following her, but an idea, an abstraction, an opinion; he was separating himself, and for ever, from his native land, and his past life, and his quest was, alas! not her, but – He was following what? Life? Yes, but what is life? Do we find life in adventure or by our own fireside? (174)

For George Moore, 'life' was more easily found in the new and the exciting, as distinct from at his own fireside. Thus Gogarty thinks with envy about the discoveries that Nora Glynn is making far from the shores of Ireland. One wonders, however, the extent to which a priest, even one with the intellectual capacities of Oliver Gogarty, working in a rural parish in Co. Mayo and insulated from the secular influences of the continent, would have had the self-awareness and the humility to make the following admission:

Again I thank you for what you have done for me, for the liberation you have brought me of body and mind. I need not have added 'body and mind' for these are not two things, but one thing. And that is the lesson I have learned. Good-bye. (147)

This parting comment does not sit comfortably with the rather conservative and repressed priest who felt it necessary to denounce Nora from the altar. The bringing together of body and mind, the notion that the two things are in essence one, indicates a rather radical break with his seminary training, his background and his life experience. He did not follow through on the attraction he felt for Nora, had not absconded with her and experienced the consummation of his desire. How, then, can one say that this is a logical evolution? His decision at the end of the novel to fake a drowning by leaving his clothes on the shore of the lake (he had left fresh clothes at the other side) and to live out his new-found freedom away from Ireland is not consistent with the mind of the man we encounter at the beginning



of the narrative. The following declaration is also somewhat out of kilter with the priest's character:

It seemed to him that we begin to love when we cease to judge. If she were different she wouldn't be herself, and it was herself he loved – the mystery of her sunny, singing nature. There is no judgement where there is perfect sympathy, and he understood that it would be as vain for him to lament that her eyebrows were fair as to lament or reprove her conduct. (177)

Whose views are being expressed here? Oliver Fogarty's? Or George Moore's? Much inclines this reader to see the latter as being in the ascendancy towards the end of *The Lake*. Robert Welch, posing the question as to why Moore was so interested in priests who were serving a Church that tried to put a stranglehold on spontaneity, answers that there was a good deal of the priest in Moore, just as there was in Joyce:

He wrote well of the comforts of the presbytery, the beeswaxed security of the convent, but he also showed, in the writing he did in Ireland (and subsequently), that life's impulses are constantly escaping (going into exile from) the constraints orthodoxy would place upon them. That makes him, as a writer, capable of celebration.<sup>18</sup>

Welch's analysis goes some way towards explaining the pastoral tone that dominates the final pages of *The Lake*, when Gogarty contemplates nature and sees the world in a totally new light. Rather than being two separate people, therefore, Moore and his character become almost as one, sharing certain insights and feelings that have been nurtured by the pain of an impossible love and the compelling desire to find meaning in the midst of what is often a harsh and mystifying existence. It is hard to believe that Moore could have written a novel like *The Lake* without having spent such long periods outside of Ireland. It was the accumulation of adventures and experiences which he sampled in places like Paris and London that made him into the cosmopolitan writer and astute art critic that he would become. Saying that is not to play down in any way his Irish heritage either,

18 Robert Welch (ed.), 'Moore's Way Back: *The Untilled Field* and *The Lake*', in *The Way Back: George Moore's The Untilled Field and The Lake* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1982), pp. 29–44, p. 33.

because one must always have something to react against as well as to extol. France and Ireland were counterfoils for Moore's complex personality and they both contributed to the emergence of someone who would ultimately develop into one of Ireland's greatest writers. The awareness of what his travels contributed to his view of the world is captured in the following important lines from *Confessions*:

In youth all thoughts seem new and we are ridiculously subjective; our eyes are always turned inwards; and the creatures whom I met in the ways and byways of Parisian life, whose gestures and attitudes I devoured with my eyes, and whose souls I hungered to know, awoke in me a terse, irresponsible curiosity, but that was all – I despised, I hated them, thought them contemptible, and to select them as subjects of artistic treatment, could not then, might never, have occurred to me, from the outside.<sup>19</sup>

Viewing things 'from the outside' is necessary for the production of good art. Moore sometimes lacked the necessary detachment when writing about Ireland. His tone could become shrill, strident, his views too obvious. He occasionally fell into the trap of 'showing' rather than 'telling'. To his credit, however, he did recognise that 'writing when in a passion' was injurious to the artistic achievement, a pitfall he nonetheless fell into on a number of occasions. And yet his literary heritage demands a recognition of his accomplishments that is sadly lacking in his country of birth. There is no statue to mark his achievements, no great mention of his vast and varied oeuvre. The annual George Moore conferences are a welcome development in this regard and they have resulted in the publication of some stimulating edited collections.<sup>20</sup> But even these merely represent a welcome start to what needs to be a meaningful reappraisal of Moore's contribution to Irish letters. While he had a somewhat ambivalent relationship with the country of his birth, Moore remains a highly significant figure in international Modernism and the Irish Revival. He died in London in 1933 and

<sup>19</sup> *Confessions*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>20</sup> Two recent examples of these collections have been cited in this chapter; *George Moore and the Quirks of Nature* (2014) and *George Moore's Paris and his Ongoing French Connections* (2015).



his ashes were returned, in accordance with his wishes, to Lough Carra in Co. Mayo. His tombstone bears the following epitaph:

*George Moore*  
*Born Moore Hall 1852, died 1933 London*  
*He deserted his family and friends*  
*For his art*  
*But because he was faithful to his art*  
*His family and friends*  
*Reclaimed his ashes for Ireland.*<sup>21</sup>

Even in death, Moore remains an enigmatic figure, a sort of hybrid Irishman who strayed far from his Mayo roots only to return there after death to reassert his unique brand of Irishness. His time in France moulded his artistic leanings and nurtured his literary talents and undoubtedly the reverence in which the French hold their writers and intellectuals convinced the son of a Mayo politician and Catholic landlord that literature was a serious business that demanded hard work as well as talent. His vast and varied oeuvre illustrates that Moore displayed plenty of both qualities.

21 Cited by Frazier, *George Moore*, p. 467.